

One transportation project in my congressional district that Jim Oberstar supported and helped to make a reality was the restoration of St. Paul's Union Depot. This marvelous train depot is now open for Amtrak service and will soon be open for transit commuters. Jim loved the grandeur of the train station and the idea of preserving the past as a means of investing in the future.

During his career Jim Oberstar took thousands of votes and was an eloquent and effective champion for dozens of causes, including adoption, cancer research, and human rights. There are two instances that I remember vividly when Jim's voice, his vote, and his strength made a lasting impact on Minnesotans. In 2002, during the debate on whether to authorize military action in Iraq, Jim was a strong voice against the war in Iraq. I was proud to stand with Jim and Rep. Martin Sabo as the members of the Minnesota House delegation voting to oppose authorizing military action in Iraq.

The other issue that defined Jim Oberstar for me was his tremendous work for Minnesota following the collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis on August 1, 2007. As the chairman of the Transportation Committee, Jim was in the right place at the right time to respond to this terrible tragedy. He moved with incredible speed to draft legislation and get it passed on the House floor within forty-eight hours of the collapse. The bill was signed into law on August 6th—less than one week after the disaster. I have no doubt in my mind had that disaster happened in any other state Jim Oberstar would have reacted in exactly the same manner.

At his funeral, Jim's daughters and son spoke lovingly and eloquently about their father. Most of us knew Jim Oberstar was a powerful Member of Congress, but he was also a committed father and a very good man. He cared about working people, the pursuit of social justice, and his Catholic faith. He loved cycling and made his passion for bicycles into national policy that Americans in every corner of this country take advantage of everyday.

I wish to extend my sincere condolences to Jim's wife, Jean, and his children—Noelle Tower, Monica Weber, Annie Oberstar, and Ted Link-Oberstar, as well as all of Jim's grandchildren.

My heartfelt condolences also go out to Jim's congressional family which includes the many dedicated and loyal staff in his Minnesota and Washington congressional offices and his Transportation and Infrastructure Committee staff. The hard work and professionalism of Jim's staff was always evident and I know Jim was very proud of them.

Finally, Jim's long-time chief-of-staff, Bill Richard, spent decades by his side and was essential to Jim's success. I also want to extend my sympathies to Bill for the loss of his friend.

I will always remember Jim as a friend, a mentor, and a public servant of epic stature. Most of all, Jim Oberstar was a truly wonderful man who lived not only a full life, but a life filled with joy and compassion.

## WATER RESOURCES REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2014

SPEECH OF

**HON. BILL SHUSTER**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 20, 2014*

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I submit a list of supporters for H.R. 3080: the Water Resources Reform and Development Act.

America's Cement Manufacturers, American Gas Association, American Association of Port Authorities, American Council of Engineering Companies, American Concrete Pavement Association, American Concrete Pipe Association, American Concrete Pumping Association, American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Iron and Steel Institute, American Public Power Association, American Public Works Association, American Road and Transportation Builders Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Soybean Association, American Waterways Operators, Arkansas Waterways Commission, Associated Equipment Distributors, Associated General Contractors of America, Association of California Water Agencies, Association of Equipment Manufacturers, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, Big River Coalition, California State Assembly, CH2M HILL, City and Port of Los Angeles, City of Sacramento, Edison Electric Institute, Everglades Foundation, Everglades Trust, Friends of the North Natomas Library, Great Lakes Maritime Task Force, Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund Fairness Coalition, Heritage Park Owners Association, Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, International Union of Operating Engineers, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, Lake Carriers Association, LiUNA, National Asphalt Pavement Association, National Association of Clean Water Agencies, National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies, National Association of Home Builders, National Association of Manufacturers, National Committee on Levee Safety, National Governor's Association, National League of Cities, National Precast Concrete Association, National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, National Rural Water Association, National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association, National Utilities Contractor Association, National Waterways Conference, Natomas Chamber of Commerce, Natomas Charter School, Natomas Community Association, Natomas Unified School District, Nature Conservancy, North Natomas Little League, Sabine Neches Navigation District, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, Santa Clara Valley Water District, Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency, Texas Department of Transportation, Tennessee River Valley Association, Transportation Construction Coalition, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, Portland Cement Association, United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, United States Society on Dams, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Valley View Acres Community Association, Vinyl Institute, Water Infrastructure Network, Water Resource Coalition, Waterways Council, Inc., Westlake Master Association, Witter Ranch Community Alliance.

## MEDIA IGNORES THAT THE ADMINISTRATION KNEW ABOUT VA PROBLEMS

**HON. LAMAR SMITH**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 22, 2014*

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, America's brave men and women in uniform come home from military service only to find severe wait times to receive the medical care they have earned.

Recent reports claim that Veteran Affairs officials in various states, including my home state of Texas, have falsified medical appointment data to conceal these long wait times.

This is dishonest, deceptive, and harmful to veterans.

But ignored for weeks by the liberal national media is that the Obama Administration has long known about these extensive wait times.

According to documents received by the Washington Times, the Bush Administration warned the Obama Administration about the prolonged wait times for our veterans in 2008—six years ago.

But you wouldn't know this if you watched NBC or ABC. Or read many media publications.

The media owes it to the American people, and to our veterans, to give them all the facts.

## HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

SPEECH OF

**HON. GUS. M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2014*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4435) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2015 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Chair, I rise today in support of my amendment, which would allow disabled veterans with service connected permanent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft on a space-available basis.

The Space-Available program is administered by the Department of Defense (DOD), which allows active duty service members, their families, retirees and certain other individuals to fill empty seats on DOD flights.

Unfortunately, veterans who are 100 percent disabled do not qualify to participate in this program. My amendment will correct this unintentional oversight and provide equality to service members who were severely injured while serving their country honorably.

Had they not been medically discharged with a service connected disability in the line of duty, these veterans were likely to have served until retirement. At no fault of their own, these deserving individuals did not have the opportunity to continue their military careers. It is an injustice that they would be penalized from this benefit due to their bravery and valor.

I would also like to note that under current DOD guidelines for Air Transportation Eligibility, it states, "Every effort shall be made to transport passengers with disabilities who are otherwise eligible to travel. Passenger service personnel and crew members shall provide assistance in loading, seating, and unloading the disabled passenger." There is already guidance in place to address passengers with disabilities, and my amendment will codify our commitment for their sacrifice.

This initiative has strong bi-partisan support, which has over 230 current cosponsors to the stand alone bill I introduced, H.R. 164. Moreover, this initiative has support in the Senate with the companion bill S. 346 offered by Senator JON TESTER from Montana.

While I was very pleased to see my amendment accepted in last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2014, it was unfortunate it was not accepted in the Senate process during consideration for the bill's passage.

The National Federation of the Blind has been very active in both the House and the Senate in its advocacy for our nations' disabled veterans. I submit a support letter for this amendment by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB).

While active duty members and their families will remain the primary beneficiaries of this program in order to assist them with the rigors of military life, my amendment simply allows these veterans the opportunity to fill available seats, a benefit I believe they have earned through their personal sacrifice.

Madam Chair, I urge my colleagues to end the inequality for our nation's wounded warriors by voting in favor of my amendment. I thank the committees and their staff for their assistance through this process

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND,  
Baltimore, MD, May 19, 2014.

Subject: Support for H.R. 164

Hon. GUS M. BILIRAKIS,  
House of Representatives, 2313 Rayburn House  
Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN BILIRAKIS: The National Federation of the Blind is the Nation's oldest and largest consumer group of blind Americans. We are composed of blind individuals who come from many different backgrounds, and we work to ensure that the concerns of all blind Americans are met.

Included in our organization is the National Association of Blinded Veterans. Recently these men and women who served our country brought to our attention a policy that we believe needs to be changed. The Space Available program is a program that allows a number of military personnel to fly on military transport planes if there is space remaining. This may include members of the Active Military, Family members of the Active Military, some components of Reserve Forces, individuals who are responding to emergency situations, such as the Red Cross, and retirees. We believe that individuals who have become disabled in the service of our country should be allowed to participate in this program.

Shortly after being made aware of this issue by blinded veterans, we learned that you introduced legislation to solve this problem in the last Congress. We are pleased that you reintroduced this legislation, H.R. 164, early in this session of Congress. The National Federation of the Blind stands firmly in support of this legislation, and will dedicate our support and our efforts to ensure its passage in this session of Congress.

Last June, thanks to your leadership, the United States House of Representatives

voted to include this language in the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act. Unfortunately our Senate companion amendment was not allowed to be considered during Senate consideration in December. We appreciate the support shown by the House of Representatives, and urge the House to continue to fight for Service Disabled Veterans, by joining with you to include this language in the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act.

We thank you for your leadership to support these men and women who have given service to defend our rights, and we now join with you to defend their rights to participate in the Space Available program.

JOHN G. PARÉ, JR.,  
Executive Director for  
Advocacy and Policy.

## RECOGNITION OF MCAA HEAD START AND EARLY HEAD START

### HON. VERN BUCHANAN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Mr. BUCHANAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Manatee Community Action Agency's (MCAA) Head Start and Early Head Start programs that change lives by helping to prepare children in my Congressional District for school.

MCAA's Head Start programs started in the summer of 1965 with 60 children. Today there are 630 children enrolled in eight locations throughout Manatee County, including 65 children with special needs. More than 3,000 children have participated in the programs since its inception.

The Head Start program serves children from age 3 to 5 and partners with parents and families to ensure continuity of positive growth and development at home and school.

Early Head Start serves children from birth to age 3, pregnant women and their families. MCAA provides very young children with an environment that stimulates them and motivates them to use all of their senses.

Furthermore, 100 percent of the children enrolled in MCAA's early learning programs during the 2012–2013 school year were provided with continuous access to healthcare, and were up to date on age-appropriate preventive and primary health care and immunizations.

MCAA's Head Start and Early Head Start students scored high marks in meeting school readiness and educational goals. On goal assessments, the students scored in the upper 90 percent range in the areas of physical health status and knowledge, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, self-concept, self-regulation, and emotional and behavioral health.

By focusing on the whole child—mental, physical, emotional and social well-being—MCAA's Head Start and Early Head Start programs prepare the children of Manatee County for a lifetime of educational success.

HONORING THE 2014 PLANO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS' TEACHER OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

### HON. SAM JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2014

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Plano Independent School Districts' 2014 Teacher of the Year Nominees. These outstanding educators are motivating and engaging our children to become lifelong learners and equip them with the tools to succeed.

Education is one of the fundamental building blocks of a person's future and a successful nation. Our teachers deserve to be celebrated for their service to the next generation of leaders. I commend you all for your hard work, dedication to your students, and commitment to excellence in education.

These 72 individuals were nominated by their peers at their respective schools. This is a true testament to their inspirational impact on not only their students but their fellow teachers.

These great teachers mold young dreams; they spark a flame for a student to study liberal arts or pursue a career in science or even push an athlete to the next level. They are the guardian of dreams for the student who wants to be the first in their family to attend and graduate college, and it is their constant, gentle approach that keeps these young leaders on the path to success. It is your encouragement, time, and tireless efforts that help make a young person's dreams of obtaining a higher education, starting a business, or serving in the U.S. military a reality. It is extraordinary teachers like you that make our community, our country and the world a better place.

It is for these reasons and countless more that I thank you all for your continued efforts in giving our students an exemplary, top-notch education.

I look forward to learning of the future successes of the nationally recognized Plano Independent School Districts 7,000 employees, hundreds of teachers, and 55,000+ students.

God Bless you and I salute you.

A record of each nominee's name and school they serve is listed below.

Heather Schmitt—Beaty, Kristi Vest—Head Start, Bethany Bowers—Isaacs, Sarah Senne—Pearson, Karen Christensen—Alldridge, Mindy Schreiber—Andrews, Chrystal Litman—Barksdale, Penny Beazley—Barron, Connie Gillmore—Bethany, Nora Davis—Beverly, Ashley Dantzler—Bogges, Amy Chilcutt—Brinker, Laura Teague—Carlisle, Jennifer Collins—Centennial, Meagan Middlebrooks—Christie, Joanne Curley—Daffron, Erin Graham—Davis, Lauren Shaw—Dooley, Andrew Wick—Forman, Emily Hollingsworth—Gulledge, Lode Lyon—Haggard, Linda Culbreth—Harrington, Cyndy Baltzley—Haun, Tiffany Samuel—Hedgcoxe, Michele Rollins—Hickey, Patrick Quinlan—Hightower, Donna Hartman—Huffman, Lori Turnbull—Hughston, Kelly Hamilton—Hunt, Shelly Arthur—Jackson, Kristin Glasscock—Mathews, Julie Walker—McCall, Leigh Adams—Meadows, Kaitlin Eckstein—Memorial, Debbie LaChey—Mendenhall, Lacy Watson—Miller, Laura